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## **Walmart Supports area Farmers and the Idaho Preferred Program**

**BOISE, Idaho** - As an Idaho Preferred® participant, Walmart will kick off Idaho Preferred® month at its Meridian store with an outdoor market offering fresh, locally grown produce. On September 9, the Meridian Walmart will encourage children to eat healthy, locally grown foods with their “Ticket to Healthy Snacking” event. Meridian students who received a ticket at their school can visit the store at Eagle and Fairview on Thursday from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. to receive a free bag of Idaho-grown produce and locally produced milk.

Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director Celia Gould will speak to the media at 3:45 p.m. about the impact that the Walmart and Idaho Preferred® partnership has on Idaho’s agriculture industry, and local farmers will be on hand to visit with students, parents and the media.

To ensure that Walmart customers have access to fresh, quality produce, the company is committed to purchasing more agricultural products from local growers. Offering locally grown produce means Walmart can not only provide higher quality, lower price fruits and vegetables, but also support farmers and the local economy. Walmart estimates that it purchases more than 70 percent of its produce from U.S.-based suppliers, making the company the biggest customer of American agriculture.

Walmart has an ongoing relationship with Idaho Preferred® — a program managed by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture a program to identify and promote Idaho food and agricultural products.

The September market will feature corn, cantaloupes, pears, apples, onions, peaches, nectarines, grapes, potatoes, squash, pumpkins, pluots, plums and more. Customers can find other Idaho-grown or processed products at Walmart year round, such as wine, milk, meat, breads, potatoes and onions.

Throughout Idaho Preferred Month, Idaho’s 16 Walmart Supercenters across the state will offer a greater selection of local fresh produce in their stores.

“Walmart is proud of the relationship we have with our many Idaho suppliers,” said Joshua Phair, Sr. Manager of Public Affairs and Government Relations, “Over the past year, we have done business with nearly 300 companies based in the Gem State for purchases of approximately \$220 million. These relationships provide our customers with a high quality, local product while supporting over 10,000 local jobs. Now more than ever, that’s important.”

“We continue to enjoy a great partnership between Idaho Walmart stores, local producers and the Idaho Preferred® program” said Celia Gould, Director of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture. “We appreciate Walmart’s recognition of the high quality of products available locally and their efforts to identify and promote Idaho Preferred® products throughout the state. We are particularly pleased this year with their efforts to encourage healthy snacking among children by offering free local produce to students in Meridian who received “Tickets to Healthy Snacking” from their teachers.

### **About Idaho Preferred®**

The Idaho Preferred® program is designed to identify and promote food and agriculture products from the Gem State. Under the direction of the Idaho Department of Agriculture, Idaho Preferred® promotes the quality, diversity, and availability of the food and agriculture products grown, raised or processed in Idaho. For more information about Idaho Preferred® or Idaho Preferred Month®, visit [www.idahopreferred.com](http://www.idahopreferred.com), or contact Leah Clark at [leah.clark@agri.idaho.gov](mailto:leah.clark@agri.idaho.gov), or 208-332-8684.

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